



EXCHANGING

Iron Valentines


We awaited with deep anxiety the result of the attack and severe bombardment of the river batteries by our gunboats. Gloom . . . ensued upon the news reaching us of their failure and withdrawal from the contest.

 H. W. Dudley, Taylor’s Battery, McClernand’s Division

Before building Fort Donelson, Confederates built two river batteries along the Cumberland River to defend the water approach to the major supply centers of Clarksville and Nashville. One, the Upper River Battery, is located several hundred feet to your right. The other, reconstructed here, was known as the Lower River Battery. Both were armed with heavy seacoast artillery, manned by inexperienced gunners. This battery contained eight 32-pounder cannon and, on the extreme left, one 10-inch Columbiad.

On February 14, 1862, Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote’s Union gunboat flotilla rounded the bend in the distance and steamed up the Cumberland to exchange “iron valentines” with the water batteries. Using the tactics that proved successful at Fort Henry a week earlier, Foote maneuvered his gunboats very close, intending to shell the batteries into submission. The cumbersome vessels, however, moved so slowly that they became excellent targets for the untested Confederate artillerymen and were forced to withdraw.

TIMBERCLADS
The timberclads played no significant part in the attack on the river batteries.
TYLER • CONESTOGA

 **UNION IRONCLAD GUNBOATS** *They weren’t invincible*
Despite the gunboats’ reputation and protective armor, the Confederate river batteries pummelled the Union fleet in a 90-minute battle during which, as Flag Officer Foote put it, they were “all cut up.”
ST. LOUIS • LOUISVILLE • PITTSBURG • CARONDELET

10-inch Columbiad
This impressive weapon could hurl a 128-pound projectile over three miles, but was not as effective as the combined fire-power of the 32-pounder smoothbores, or the 6.5-inch rifle in the Upper River Battery.

32-pounder Smoothbores
Arranged in two batteries of four guns each, these cannon, capable of firing a 32-pound shot up to a mile, inflicted most of the damage on the Union gunboats.

LOWER RIVER BATTERY

UPPER RIVER BATTERY

6.5-inch Rifle

BATTLEFIELD TIMELINE | February 1862

YOU ARE HERE

- 12th
Union arrives at Fort Donelson
- 13th
Union attacks Maney’s Battery
- 14th
Union gunboats attack Fort Donelson
- 15th
Confederate breakout begins
- 16th
Confederates surrender




Near here four Confederate regiments from Kentucky charged for over a mile to assault the Federal troops guarding the other side of Stones River. The cost of their late afternoon attack was stunning—over 430 of the 1,200 men in the ranks were killed, wounded, or captured.

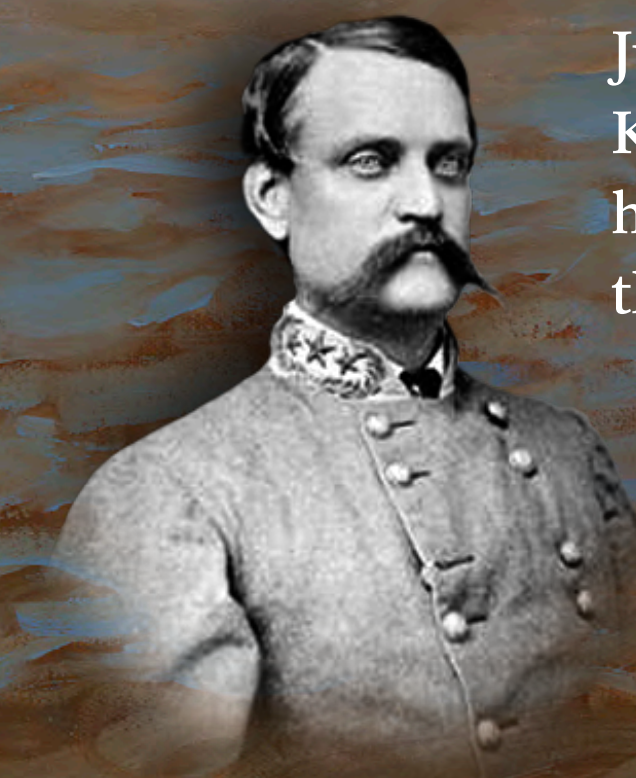
These Kentucky troops called themselves the “orphans” of the Army of Tennessee. They had hoped their home state would leave the Union. But Kentucky never voted to secede. Unlike Alabama, Tennessee, or Mississippi soldiers, Kentucky’s orphans had little chance of getting supplies, mail, or even a pair of new socks from loved ones. These orphans’ homes were behind Union lines.

My poor Orphans!

My poor Orphan Brigade! They have cut it to pieces!

 John C. Breckinridge, major general, commanding 1st Division, Hardee’s Corps

Just six years before this battle, Kentucky’s John Breckinridge had been the Vice President of the United States.



1863
JANUARY 2

late-afternoon



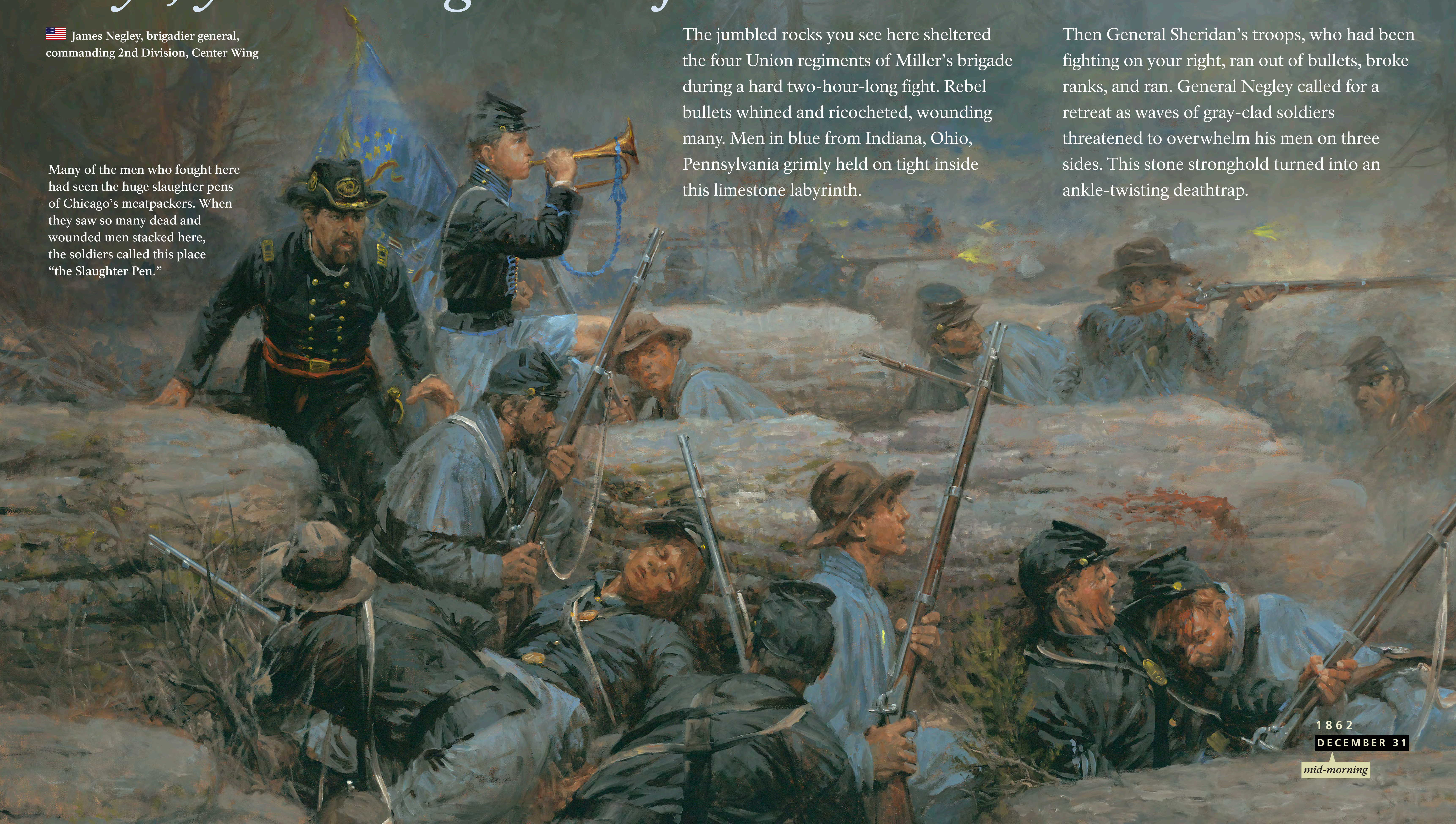
Boys, you must get out of here! You are surrounded!

 James Negley, brigadier general,
commanding 2nd Division, Center Wing

Many of the men who fought here had seen the huge slaughter pens of Chicago's meatpackers. When they saw so many dead and wounded men stacked here, the soldiers called this place "the Slaughter Pen."

The jumbled rocks you see here sheltered the four Union regiments of Miller's brigade during a hard two-hour-long fight. Rebel bullets whined and ricocheted, wounding many. Men in blue from Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania grimly held on tight inside this limestone labyrinth.

Then General Sheridan's troops, who had been fighting on your right, ran out of bullets, broke ranks, and ran. General Negley called for a retreat as waves of gray-clad soldiers threatened to overwhelm his men on three sides. This stone stronghold turned into an ankle-twisting deathtrap.



1862
DECEMBER 31

mid-morning



*... thousands of small arms kept up a roar equal to Niagara.
Men were swept away by hundreds—trees shrubs and everything
was torn up, cut off, or shivered...*

 John Magee, corporal, Stanford's Mississippi Light Artillery

1862

DECEMBER 31

mid-afternoon

Anchoring the Union Line

HAZEN'S BRIGADE

Veterans called this blood-soaked open ground ahead of you "Hell's Half-Acre." Here a brigade of 1,600 bluecoat infantry faced wave after wave of attackers attempting to overrun them. Four times Confederate brigades charged. Four times the defenders here gave no ground.

At dawn, 43,000 Union soldiers had stretched from McFadden's Ford, one mile to the north, to the Smith farm three miles to the south. By noon, half of that huge army had folded back on itself, like a pocketknife closing, with 13,000 men dead, wounded, or captured.

Four regiments that fought so fiercely here under Colonel William Hazen were the hinge of that folding knife. From 9 a.m. to dusk, Hazen's men were the only Federals to hold their ground on the first day of battle at Stones River.



Confederate Sunset

As the sun set on the first day of battle, about 3,000 rebels from Missouri made their final charge here. Crossing Ben Ruddick's stubbled cornfield, they ran straight toward the muzzles of Federal cannon set wheel hub to wheel hub against a line of trees. After hours of fighting withdrawals, this last Union line held firm. Rebuffed Confederates ebbed back to Elkhorn Tavern. In the dusk, men of both armies feared they were standing on the brink of collapse.

...it was almost dark and we got so near the [Federal] battery that the fire from the guns would pass in jetting streams, through our lines.



Asa Payne, private, 3rd Missouri Regiment



1862

MARCH 7 | MARCH 8

sunset

Outnumbered, hard-pressed Union cannoneers and infantrymen regrouped and reloaded here at the edge of Ruddick's field.



Vulnerable in Victory

It was the fiery end of the best day of Earl Van Dorn's 20 years as a professional soldier. Bone-tired from the jarring of a week-long ambulance ride and still feverish from pneumonia, the Confederate commander lay down here in the side yard of Elkhorn Tavern amid the wreckage of the day's battle.

Because he now controlled his enemy's sole supply line, General Van Dorn assumed he had the battle of Elkhorn Tavern won. No one yet knew that the rebel wagons bearing food and ammunition for the next day's fight were hopelessly out of reach.

At midnight two young Texans brought word to Confederate headquarters that Generals McCulloch and McIntosh had been killed early in the Leetown fighting. They took orders back for their entire division to march through the night to rejoin Van Dorn here before sunup.

1862
MARCH 7 | MARCH 8
midnight



With Deer Tails in Their Hair

On the morning of the battle, Major General Andrew Jackson's Indian allies surrounded the lower portion of Horseshoe Bend. The Cherokee were positioned across the river from where you stand; the Lower Creek were farther upriver to your left.

Hearing distant cannon fire, Cherokee and Lower Creek warriors swam across the river, stole Red Stick canoes from this bank, and took them back to the other side. Hundreds of Indians—adorned with deer tails—then canoed across, a few at a time, to attack the village of Tohopeka behind you.





While the Long Roll Was Beating

I never had such emotions as while the long roll was beating... It was not fear, it was not anxiety or concern of the fate of those who were so soon to fall but it was a kind of enthusiasm that thrilled through every nerve and animated me with the belief that the day was ours without adverting to what it must cost us...

Maj. John Reid, Tennessee Militia

While General Coffee's men took position across the Tallapoosa River, Major General Jackson stationed his remaining soldiers here, in front of the Red Sticks' log barricade (marked by the white posts). In this field about 1,400 of Jackson's 2,000 men were Tennessee militia; 600 were regulars from the 39th U.S. Infantry Regiment.

On both sides the tension built while cannon-shot slammed into the barricade. At 12:30 p.m. the drums beat the long roll announcing the order to charge. The army surged forward. Drummers like Americus Hammock, one of several African American soldiers with Jackson, echoed the pounding hearts of the men as they advanced into battle.



The Tennessee militia, preparing for battle, wore homespun clothing dyed blue or brown for uniformity. Most carried muskets and bayonets.



War Comes to Fairfield

Jackson arrived at Fairfield for the last time on May 4, 1863. By then the plantation was a vast camp, crowded with thousands of Union prisoners and Confederate wounded.



War brought profound changes to the Chandler family, Fairfield, and the slaves who toiled on the plantation. Three of Thomas Chandler's sons enlisted in the Confederate army. When the Union army occupied Fredericksburg in 1862 many of Chandler's slaves seized freedom, leaving the family without its customary workforce.

In December 1862 the Confederates established a major supply depot at Guinea Station, just a few hundred yards from Fairfield's back door. Camps sprawled across the plantation. Stonewall Jackson himself camped here for a week, declining the Chandler's offer to stay in the house. Instead he pitched a tent nearby.

By 1863 Chandler had had enough: he sold Fairfield. But before the Chandlers could move away, Fairfield's most famous visitor would return yet again—this time not to camp but to die. Jackson's death here propelled the plantation to a fame it had never known.

To learn more about Jackson's last days at Fairfield, press the audio button on the right.



On to Richmond!

Before the Wilderness, battlefield stalemate meant retreat by one side or the other—a return to the starting point to try again another day. But not here. Union General-in-Chief Ulysses S. Grant rendered stalemate in the Wilderness irrelevant. On the night of May 7, 1864 as the woods around you still smoldered, Grant ordered the Union army not backward, but forward—south toward Spotsylvania Court House and eventually Richmond.

As Union soldiers quietly left the earthworks in front of you, they realized a turning point had arrived. And when later that night Grant rode among them, they cheered. They cheered not because Grant had won, but because he refused to lose. For the Union army, eleven months of non-stop campaigning—and ultimately victory—lay ahead.



Wild cheers echoed through the forest, and glad shouts of triumph rent the air. Men swung their hats, tossed up their arms, and pressed forward to within touch of their chief, clapping their hands, and speaking to him with the familiarity of comrades....The night march had become a triumphal procession for the new commander.

Lieutenant Colonel Horace Porter, Union staff officer



Sow...Tend...Harvest

For most of its existence, Chatham had an unchanging rhythm: sow, tend, and harvest, each according to the crop. Most of Chatham's slaves lived out their lives to this seasonal cadence, year after year. More than 50 enslaved workers—sometimes more than 100—tended to Chatham's 1,300 acres.

Slaves in these fields managed huge swaths of wheat or long rows of corn. Some of the crop went to feed the plantation's cattle. The rest was ground into meal at Chatham's mill on nearby Claiborne Run and sold to merchants in town. Slaves received none of it, except in the form of rations.

Instead, slaves received shelter in small cabins, a bundle of clothes each year, and enough food to keep body and soul together. Holidays and Sundays assumed huge importance in the slaves' lives—they were the only days of rest.

A 1798 painting of slaves working under the gaze of an overseer near Fredericksburg. This is the only known image of Fredericksburg-area slaves at work. *Courtesy Maryland Historical Society*





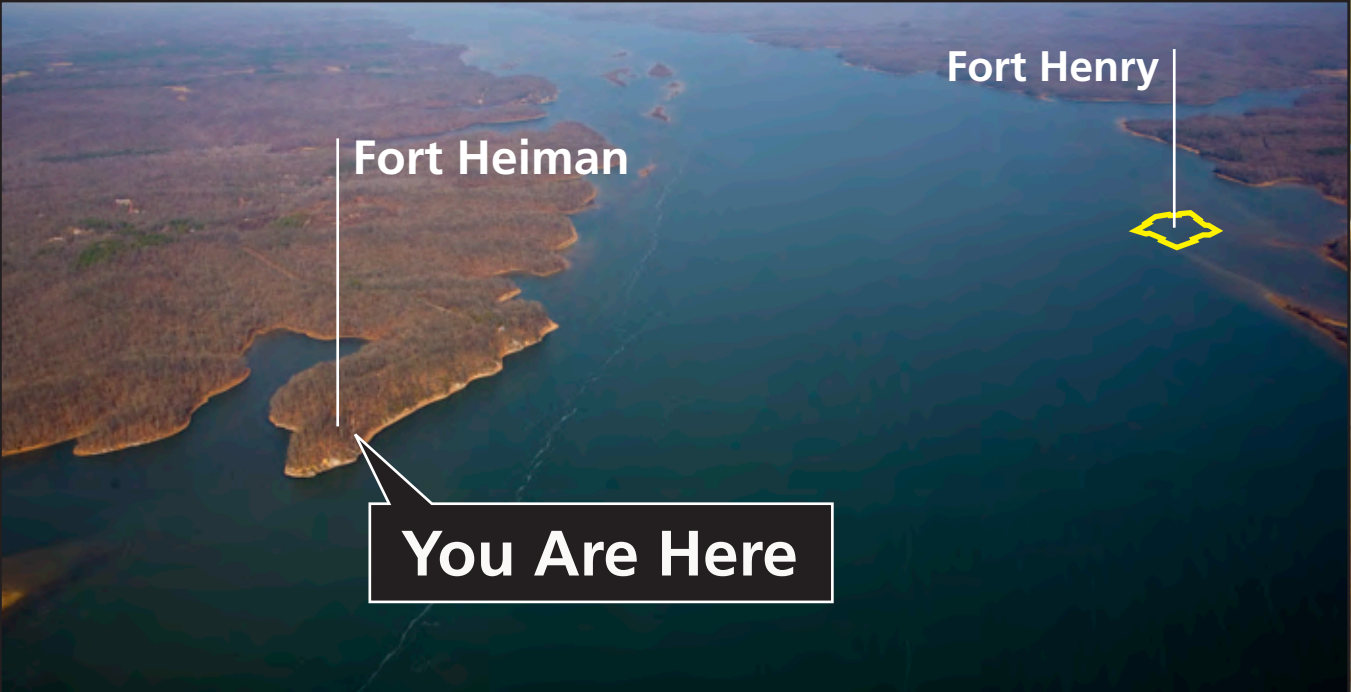
Had you been standing here at noon on February 6, 1862, you would have had a panoramic view of Union Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote’s flotilla of four ironclad and three timberclad gunboats as they steamed upriver and began firing rapidly into Fort Henry (now under the waters of Kentucky Lake). This, the initial battle in Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant’s campaign to open the Tennessee and Cumberland

ivers to Union forces, was the first time American ironclad vessels were used in combat. With the fort partly inundated by Tennessee River floodwaters, its commander, Brig. Gen. Lloyd Tilghman, knew Fort Henry could not be held. Keeping only 100 artillerymen, he sent the rest of his forces (about 2,500 men) to Fort Donelson, 12 miles away on the Cumberland River. Tilghman and his gunners gamely

returned the gunboats’ fire, but were severely outgunned. At 1:45 p.m., with only four cannon still operating, Tilghman surrendered to Foote. The Confederates had suffered five killed and 11 wounded; the Union sailors lost 11 killed and 31 wounded. Grant and Brig. Gen. John A. McClernand’s troops, much to the navy’s delight, did not arrive until after the fort had been surrendered.



The View from Fort Heiman



Finding Fort Henry
The original site of Fort Henry is completely submerged beneath Kentucky Lake. The buoy in the middle of the channel marks its approximate location.